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STEPHEN D. COAN
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State Fire Marshal Offers Outdoor Grilling Safety Tips

Start the Summer Off Safely

“Be safe this summer,” said State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan. “Inspect your grill for leaks and cracks, and teach children to stay three feet away from any grill in use. He added, “Over two-thirds of all grill fires happen between May and September, when we are most likely to barbecue outdoors.”

Check for Leaks

“Check to make sure all the connections are tight and secure before firing up the gas grill for the first time this season,” said Fire Marshal Coan. He suggests checking for and replacing any cracked hoses.

Safety Tips

- Propane and charcoal grills should only be used outdoors.
- The grill should be placed well away from the home, deck railings and out from under eaves and overhanging branches.
- Keep children and pets away from the grill area.
- Keep your grill clean by removing grease or fat buildup from the grills and in trays below the grill.
- Never leave your grill unattended.
- If you smell gas while cooking, immediately get away from the grill and call the fire department. Do not move the grill.



39 Incidents Involving Grills in 2010 Caused \$50,327 in Damages

In 2011, there were 39 fires and explosion incidents reported to the Massachusetts Fire Incident Reporting System (MFIRS) involving open fired grills. These incidents caused one civilian injury and \$50,327 in direct property damages.

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Grafton Had Large Loss Grill Fire

On July 31, 2011, at 6:49 p.m., the Grafton Fire Department was called to a grill fire at a single-family home. When the homeowner lit the grill flames shot out from underneath the LP-gas grill and ignited the exterior deck causing \$10,000 in damages.

LP-Gas Tanks Not Permitted Inside Homes or on Balconies Above the 1st Floor

LP-gas (liquid propane) cylinders are not permitted inside homes or on balconies above the first floor of any building where people live (527 Code of Massachusetts Regulations Section 6:07). Coan said, “A leaky grill could pose a hazard to people below because LP-gas is heavier than air and sinks. A car or someone smoking a cigarette below could ignite the fumes, or the vapors could enter the building through a door, window or dryer vent and find a pilot light, an air conditioner, or a compressor as an ignition source.”

Use 10 Feet Away From Buildings

Coan added, “You must keep LP-gas tanks upright, five feet away from building openings and ignition sources such as doors, window, dryer vents air intake vents, pilot lights, and appliance compressors. It is even safer to keep and use gas grills ten feet away from the house.”

Heat from Grill Ignites Structure

On July 18, 2011, at 5:11 p.m., the Brockton Fire Department was called to a grill fire on the back porch of a single-family home. Flames from the LP-gas grill ignited the porch decking and railings. Damages from the blaze were estimated to be \$6,000.

Heat from Grill Ignites Shed & Starts 1 Exposure Fire

On July 24, 2011, at 7:23 p.m., the Wareham Fire Department was called to a grill fire in a back yard. Heat from the LP-gas grill ignited a nearby utility shed, which in turn ignited a neighbor's fence and utility shed causing \$6,000 in total damages.

Charcoal Grills

- There are several ways to get the charcoal ready to use. Charcoal chimney starters allow you to start the charcoal using newspaper as a fuel.
- If you use a starter fluid, use only charcoal starter fluid. Once the coals have been lit, never add starter fluid to the fire — flames may travel up the stream resulting in serious burns.
- Keep charcoal fluid out of the reach of children and away from heat sources.
- There are also electric charcoal starters, which do not use fire. Be sure to use an extension cord safe for outdoor use.
- When you are finished grilling, let the coals completely cool before disposing in a metal container.

Short Circuit Ignited Gas Grill

On September 9, 2011, at 6:57 p.m., the C.O.M.M. Fire Department was called to an outside grill fire by the home's pool. The masonry grill was part of an 'island' structure that also included a refrigerator, cabinets and a counter top. The 'island' was wired for electricity and piped for LP-gas. It is believed that salt corrosion from Hurricane Irene caused a short-circuit arc igniting the propane. The fire spread from the grill to the other parts of the unit causing \$7,000 in damages.